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Stories
from the
Thiruvilayadal Puranam

In five grades of difficulty

Grade III

**Ugra Pandyan,
the son of Meenakshi, etc.,**

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by

S. K. VATHSA, M. A

MADURA:

...BALAKRISHNA KONE,

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E. M. GOPALAKRISHNA KONE,

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Printed at
The Excelsior Press,
Madura.

PREFACE.

Many puranic stories have been retold in simple English for the use of the young boys. But as yet no attempt has been made to render the stories from the Tiruvilayadal Puranam into simple and easy English such as young boys may read and digest. This present series is intended to supply such a want. This series consists of five books in different grades of difficulty. The first grade is suitable for use as supplemental reading book for the first form and higher grade books in the series are for use in the succeeding higher classes.

No effort has been spared to make each grade book suit exactly the form for which it is intended and it is hoped that all the stories of the Tiruvilayadal Puranam will be summarised within these five books.

A simple, vigorous and conversational style is the key-note of these books.

The author hereby acknowledges with thanks the various corrections and suggestions offered by his friends.

Suggestions for further improvement will be gratefully received by him.

The Author.

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Stories from Thiruvilayadal

I. THE BIRTH AND YOUTH OF UGRA PANDYAN.

Soundara Pandyan, otherwise the great god Siva, had been ruling over Madura for some time. Meenakshi, as befits an obedient wife, willingly helped her lord in his duties. The Kingdom flourished. Everywhere it was spoken of as the very best. The other two tamil Kingdoms—Chera and Chola—had been completely obscured.

There was only one drawback now. There was yet no yuvaraja for the kingdom. The king, namely the great God, just wished that Meenakshi should beget a son. At once, Meenakshi became pregnant.

After nine months, a son was born to Meenakshi. The whole kingdom rejoiced. Feasts and festivities were celebrated everywhere. Is there any necessity

to describe the child? To say it was beautiful would never convey even one-thousandth part of the glorious appearance of the little one. He shone like many sons. He should be so; for was not he the son of the great God and Goddess, Siva and Parvati? God Murugan himself had taken birth as Ugra Pandyan.

Soundara Pandyan, in due course, performed all ceremonies in relation to the child, such as, having the horoscope cast or Jatakarmam, naming him or Namakarnam and so on. The child grew up. In his fifth year he was invested with the sacred thread. Afterwards, Brihaspati, the preceptor of the Gods, himself undertook to teach the young boy. The boy first mastered the Vedas and then the sixty-four branches of learning. Then Brihaspati taught him also the use of all weapons of warfare. Siva only can teach him the Pasupathastram and so He did to his son. Before his eighth year ended, Ugra Pandyan was the master of all sciences.

As time went on, the fond father noted with delight the development of the boy. His body was a real pleasure to look at, so very handsome was he. His character and conduct were very unique. He was true, magnanimous, forgiving, kind and generous, god-fearing and dutiful. His bravery was praise-worthy and the godly father felt that he will make a name in the world. But now the king's only thought was to get him married well.

II. THE MARRIAGE AND CORONATION OF UGRA PANDYAN.

The king expressed his wish to his ministers. They all thought deeply. Who among the reigning kings was equal in rank to the Pandyan royal family? There was none, but still they had to choose some one. Finally they pitched upon the king of Manavoor, a northern kingdom, who belonged to the solar race of kings. He had a daughter Kanthimathi, by name, who was as beautiful as her name signified.

That night the king of Manavoor dreamt a dream. Siva, the great Lord appeared to him, and said "Know you, oh king, that I am the God Sundareshwara of Madura. Take thy daughter to Madura with all due honours and let her marry Ugra Pandyan."

The king woke up at once. His joy knew no bounds. Left to himself, he would not have dared to approach the king of Madura with words of Sambandam. But God had been kind to him. His family had now become ennobled. Early morning he bathed and did his duties. At once, with his daughter seated in a beautiful chariot and followed by his family, ministers and the four kinds of army, he started for Madura.

Here, in Madura, the ministers of the king, with some of the king's relatives left early morning for Manavoor to ask for the hand of Kanthimathi. But on the way they met the king of Manavoor himself. The ministers learned from him

that God Somasundara had ordered him in a dream to start for Madura with his daughter and that he had done so in obedience to that dream. The ministers at once sent back advance information to the Madura king and turned back. They and the king of Manavoor with his following soon reached Madura.

The ministers fixed an auspicious day for marriage in consultation with astrologers. They then sent invitations to all kings. The kings at once responded to it. All the Devas and Rishis too were invited. They also came to the marriage. Soundara Pandyan and Meenakshi received them graciously and kindly. Brihaspathi explained to all present the promise of future greatness in the horoscope of Kanthimathi. The people present rejoiced.

The auspicious day dawned. The town had put on a gay appearance. Not a house was left undecorated. Now the bridegroom bathed and being dressed sat on a seat before the fire. The ladies

dressed Kanthimathi after she bathed and made her sit to the right of the bridegroom.

The king of Manavoor then washed the feet of Ugra Pandyan and garlanded him. Then placing the hand of his daughter in the hands of Ugra Pandyan said, "I, Somasekhara of the solar race of kings, do hereby, give in marriage my daughter, Kanthimathi to Ugra Pandyan, son of Soundara Pandyan." Then music sounded. Flowers were sprinkled and Ugra Pandyan tied the marriage-knot on the neck of Kanthimathi. The wedding was over.

Then the bride and bridegroom went in procession round the town. The guests were treated to a sumptuous feast.

Shortly after, Ugra Pandyan sent for his son and told him,

"Dear boy, both Indra and Varuna are thine enemies. Meru Mount will grow proud. Take therefore this Chakra weapon and with this make Indra's crown fall into the dust. This javelin, throw it

into the sea when it flows and make it ebb. Aim this ball against Meru so that its pride will be humbled."

Thus saying, the king handed over these three weapons of warfare to his son, Ugra-Pandyan.

Soundara Pandyan then had Ugra-Pandyan crowned as king. He handed over his sceptre and crown to him. Then Soundara Pandyan also advised his ministers to be ever watchful over the interests of the young king. Then turning to his son, he said, "Dear boy, for a long time, I have been king over this fair land. Hereafter you will rule. Do so, according to the shastras and with the advice of your able ministers. Now allow me to depart."

Then, after ordering his army of spirits to assume their old forms, Soundara Pandyan and Queen Meenakshi went to the temple and became one with the God and Goddess there.

III. THE SEA'S FLOW AND EBB.

Ugra Pandyan, after he became king, performed ninety-six Ashwamedha sacrifices. Indra became angry. He asked Varuna to make the sea flow into the Madura kingdom and destroy the city. Varuna consented. He did not for a moment think of the consequences.

At dead of night, the sea began to flow. The waters ran up into the interior. From the east, the waters spread and spread till they came very near to Madura city.

Ugra Pandyan was sleeping soundly. All at once he dreamt a dream. It was as if God Sundareshwara Himself appeared before him and said, "Rise up, Pandya and bestir yourself. The sea is at the gate of your city. Sleep not. Throw the javelin that I gave thee and be victorious."

The king at once woke up. Followed by his ministers he went to the confines of the city and saw that the sea was indeed approaching by leaps and bounds. The

roar was tremendous. Ugra Pandyan stood as if thunder-struck.

At once, he remembered the dream. He wheeled the javelin from right to left and threw it far into the midst of the approaching waters. The waters immediately subsided.

At the same time, Ugra Pandyan saw in the sky, mounted on a golden chariot God Sundar and Meenakshi. He bowed down to them and with tottering steps reached his palace.

Then he made over the whole land so reclaimed to God Sundareshwara and ruled over it as his Viceroy.

IV. INDRA'S DEFEAT.

Once the planets by their movements made rains impossible. The whole tamil land underwent a very severe drought. Plants and trees all dried up. The people suffered very much. They began to blame the king.

All the three kings, Cheran, Cholan and Pandyan approached Agasthiya Agasthiya was in the Pothya mountains. They prostrated before him. Agasthiya at once divined the object of their visit.

"Well," said he, "The sun moves before Mars and Venus (Sukra) follows behind. For twelve years therefore there will be no rains. Go to Indra and beg rains of him. I cannot do anything in the matter.

The kings all wondered. "How is it possible for us, mortals, to go to Heaven and ask Indra for the boon," said they. Agasthiya then replied as follows:—

"Know you, that of all gods, Siva is the greatest and of Saktis (goddesses) Rudrani is the foremost? Know you also, of all religious observances, the Monday fast is the best? This fast can be observed at all sacred places. But a million times greater in result is the fast when observed in Madura. Do you know, why? Because it is the residence of God Somasundara. Here, Siva obtains the name of Soma-

sundara for here he lives with Uma (Sakti). If the New-Moon day falls on a Monday, then it is the right-royal day for this observance. This fast again is to be observed with wealth earned justly.

"Hear, how the ceremony is to be observed. On Sunday, previous to the day of fast you must not take anything during the night. Rise up betimes and after performing your oblutions go to the temple. Bathe in the Golden-Lotus tank and then worship the God with flowers and rice. The mantra for this is Panchakshara. After worshipping the God, dedicate yourself to perform this observance. Think of God Siva, as the embodiment of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. His form must be embedded in thy memory as possessing five faces. His body should be considered as refulgent as millions of Suns put together. His ten hands should hold the Sakti, Soola, the snake, and so on. He, who observes this ceremony, will obtain whatever he longs for.

"This Monday observance, I tell thee, is of five kinds. One may take his meals during the ceremony either early morning, or at night or abstain from eating throughout the day. One may not sleep throughout the observance or again one may spend all the time in worshipping the God. Thus there are five different kinds.

"This observance may be performed for one year or two years or for any number of years.

"This great ceremony, look you, everyone of the Gods such as Indra, Vishnu and Brahma performed once. By this great observance all mankind too can obtain salvation. Then you will all get power to go to the Heavens."

The kings heard these words of the great sage, Agasthiya. They then took leave of him and turned back to Madura.

In Madura, they all observed the ceremony accordingly and at the same time they obtained three flying-chariots. They then reached Swarga. They were kindly

received by Indra. The kings of Chola and Chera lands seated themselves in their seats as requested by Indra. But Ugra Pandyan went and sat on Indra's seat by his side.

Indra then enquired about the two kings' welfare and ordered abundant rains in their kingdoms. He then gave them rich presents and sent them back. Turning to Ugra Pandyan, he had a heavy garland sent for and with it garlanded him. The garland was made of a very heavy metal but appeared as if made of flowers Indra thought that Ugra Pandyan will not be able to wear it and will sink beneath its weight. But our hero wore it like a garland of flowers. Indra wondered. He, then and there, named Ugra Pandyan, "The bearer of the heavy garland." But Ugra Pandyan had to return without the object of the journey being fulfilled.

By Indra's command, good rains fell in Chola and Chera kingdoms But the Madura kingdom was still in the throes of the drought Ugra Pandyan became angry.

He imprisoned all the clouds that ranged on the Pothiya hills.

But now Indra's ire was really roused. "What a presumptuous mortal, this is ! He had bearded me in my own den but then he came there as a guest and so was not put to much indignity. Now he sets at naught my high decrees. This puny creature must indeed be punished." Thus thought Indra and soon repaired to Madura with his army to fight with the king.

Then ensued a fierce fight between Indra and Ugra Pandyan. All of Indra's weapons were rendered powerless. For everyone of them Ugra Pandyan had a check. Then Indra sent his great Vajrayuda against Ugra Pandyan. It thundered and roared and came on shedding sparks of fire. But Ugra Pandyan was not afraid. He met this with his discus. This discus went and cut down Indra's Vajrayuda in twain. Then the discus falling upon the head of Indra carried away his crown. Indra now began to fear for his life. He turned back

and began to flee. Then from a place of retreat, Indra sent letters to Ugra Pandyan. "I will order rains to fall in thy kingdom. Kindly free the clouds, you have imprisoned." Thus he wrote and begged. Accordingly Ugra Pandyan freed these clouds. Then there were heavy rains in the Madura kingdom.

V. THE HUMILIATION OF MOUNT MERU.

Once again there was a severe drought in the Madura kingdom. The king became anxious. He prayed to the God Somasundara for rains. But the God gave him no promise.

With a heavy heart and with a mind oppressed with the sufferings of his people, the king passed sleepless nights. One day a Siddha appeared to him in a dream. The Siddha said,

"King! grieve not for that which will not happen. There will be no rains for a year more. Now go to Mount Meru and there you will find in one of the hid-

den caves untold wealth. Humble Meru and bring back as much wealth as you want. Leave your mark also on the spot."

The next day the king accordingly ordered preparations to be made ready for his expedition. Soon after, he started on the campaign. A great army followed him. Brahmins recited songs of victory. Music sounded. He first passed the Chola kingdom. Then Dandakanad, the Telugu country and Carnata also were crossed. Passing through Malwa, Virata and Madyadesa he reached Benares. He then bathed in the river Ganges and stayed there worshipping the lord for some days. From there after journeying many miles he entered upon dense forests untravelled by men. Afterwards he crossed the Himalayas or the abode of snow. Still journeying north, he traversed many regions and varshas like the Bharata varsha which was a thousand yojana in length. He then crossed Kimpurisha varsha and Hari varsha. Then he reached the foot of the great Nidatha mountain.

He passed over this mountain and came upon Ilavrata varsha watered by the Sambu river. Soon after crossing this country, he saw the golden Mount Meru. Approaching the base of the Mountain, he bowed down to it. Leaving his army he went round the Mountain and after due reverence was paid to it, he called it thus,

"O King of Mountains! Great Bow of my August Father Siva! Thou perpetual eye of the Universe! Thou famous Mountain whom the planets and stars ever go round! Oh, thou temple of the gods! Please come here. I want thee."

But the Meru mountain heeded him not. Then Ugra Pandyan got angry and aimed the ball at its head. The tremendous Mountain Meru swerved a bit. The temples of the Gods on its summit seemed to fall into pieces. The Mountain reeled. Then only the great Mountain came to him. It had eight arms and four faces.

"Why did you tarry so long?" asked the king.

"Please hear me, great king. Everyday, with this form of mine, I used to go to Madura and there worship the great God Sundareshwara. To-day I forgot this duty and this is my punishment. Kindly inform me why I am summoned What do you require at my hands?" replied the Mountain.

"I came here to obtain wealth," answered the king.

"Then take as much as you want from the cave there," said the Mount and departed.

Accordingly, Ugra Pandyan opened the cave and taking as much riches as he wanted, closed it. With his seal he impressed his mark on it. Then followed by his army he retraced his way back and shortly after reached Madura. There he paid his respects to the God Sundareshwara and then went to his palace.

Then Ugra Pandyan spent all the wealth thus obtained for the welfare of his people. Soon after, by the commands of the great God the planets resumed their

normal movements. Once again rain fell in torrents The kingdom throve on.

Then on an auspicious day, Ugra Pandyan had his son Vira Pandyan crowned king. He then repaired to the temple and there became one with the Lord in a halo of light that came out of his body.

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VI. THE UNION OF THE FOUR TOWERS.

During the reign of Abishega Pandyan another leela of the great God Somasundara took place.

Abishega Pandyan was the grandson of Ugra Pandyan. He was once doing puja to the great God in his temple. Indra who had gone there for the same purpose had to wait there for sometime. Then he performed his puja and returned to Swarga. But he was greatly ruffled because, he, though he was King of the Gods had to wait for some time and yield preference to a mere mortal.

Varuna at this time came to the assembly of Indra. He noticed the drooping countenance of Indra and asked him thus.

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"What ails thee, Indra?"

"I had been to Madura to perform puja to the great God Sundareshwara. I had been delayed there. So I feel all out of sorts," said Indra.

"Is the God there such a powerful one ?" asked Varuna.

"Know you not that it was that great God who removed the Brahmin's curse against me? He, it was again who made the curse over my elephant null and void," said Indra.

"Is it so ? Would the great God then drive away the fell disease that pains me now ? " asked Varuna.

"Why such a doubt ? Brahma and Vishnu failed to cure me but the great God Siva did it. He will certainly cure you also," answered Indra.

"Oh, this is the result of the good omen. I had, while starting for Swarga. I met on the way before starting, Kamadhenu and her child." So saying, Varuna returned home and ordered the sea to flow and destroy Madura.

At once the sea began to swell and flow into the interior. It was as if mountains of water had risen to swallow the whole land of the Pandyan. The Devas did not know that it was the doing of Varuna. They began to fear for the world. They thought it was the end of the universe. They then repaired to Madura and stood there worshipping the Lord. The people of Madura did not know what to do. They trembled. The floods reached the confines of Madura city. Abishegan ran at once to the temple of the great God and fell down prostrate. He wept and prayed to the God to stay the floods.

Then the great God said, "Fear not, fear not, king. I will in a trice, relieve thee of thine anxiety."

Then the God ordered the four clouds in His hair-plait to drink the waters. This they did. Soon after the waters subsided. Everyone understood that it was one of the sports of the great God.

Varuna thoughtlessly became enraged. He at once ordered his seven clouds to

drink up the waters of all the oceans and rain them down all at once on Madura.

The clouds obeyed their lord. They drank up the waters of all the oceans. Then they began to rain in torrents over Madura. The sun became invisible. Darkness reigned supreme. Between the Heavens and the earth, there appeared nothing visible. Water, water was there everywhere.

Trees were uprooted. Mountains fell down. Earth broke in twain. It appeared that the great deluge had commenced. The elephants of the quarters lost their bearings The crown-jewels slipped from the crown of the great thousand-headed Adisesha. His body trembled. He became afraid. The people awaited their doom. Pandyan alone still had faith in the great God Somasundara.

He entered the temple and lying prostrate before the lord, prayed there long.

"Great God! Fountain of mercy! Friend of the sore and afflicted! Is this

calamity to be borne by thy devoted people? Has not they heart melted yet? Oh, spare us, spare us, Lord," cried he.

Siva came to the king's protection. He ordered his four clouds to go at once and drive away the raining clouds. He ordered them to become four towers and cover Madura like an umbrella. The four clouds did so. Not a drop of water fell on the city of Madura. Varuna's seven clouds became ashamed of their powerlessness and Varuna himself became afraid.

He then came to Madura and bathed in the waters of the Golden Lotus. His disease left him then. He then smeared the sacred ashes on his brow and wearing the garland of Rudraksha he worshipped the God Somasundara. He fell down at the Lord's feet and humbly asked his forgiveness.

"Oh Varuna, thou art forgiven. What dost thou now require?" asked the lord.

"My God, my disease left as soon as I bathed in the Golden Lotus. Thou,

Great God, art not understood even by Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra and others. Great refulgent Being, what an audacity was it on my part, that I wanted to test thine power! What good points, didst thou, O Lord, find in me that thou favouredst me with the cure of my disease? Oh, thou Ocean of Mercy, forgive my sin and hereafter my one duty will be to worship thine lotus feet and obtain salvation." cried Varuna.

Because the four clouds that Siva sent to protect Madura united in the form of towers to form an umbrella over Madura, Madura came to be known as 'Nanmadakkudal.'

VII. THE STONE-ELEPHANT'S ANIMATION.

Once the God Somasundara wanted to benefit the subjects of the Madura king. He took the form of a Siddha. His hair was plaited and was gracefully tied into a knot. His brow was adorned with the sacred ashes. Diamond rings sparkled in his ears. He wore the sacred thread and

his cane was set with gems. He wore the tiger's skin, as his loin cloth. He had wooden sandals for his feet. His face was bright and his appearance betokened great intelligence and powers.

This Siddha began to loiter in the streets. He was found at one time on the terrace of a palace. The next minute, he was standing before a shop in the bazaar. One minute he was here and the next minute he was miles off.

His powers were extra-ordinary. A mountain known to be many, many miles away will be brought by him very near. The young, he made old. The old obtained youth. He transformed a male into a female and then back again into a male. He made the blind see, the deaf hear, the dumb speak and the lame walk straight. To make enemies into friends or drive friends into emmity was as easy for him as lifting up his hand. In severe summer, the Vaigai will be made to run with full floods. The next minute there will not be a drop of

water in it. He made the sea-water sweet and well-water and the water of the river saltish. He will throw his rod into the air. It will stay there. He will push in a needle into it and on the needle, standing on his toe, he will dance and caper. He will fly in the sky like a bird. With his hands he will squeeze water out of the clouds. The stars will be made to appear in the day-time. He will enter fire and come out unscathed. He will walk upon water or stand on air. The uneducated will become a Kamban or Kalidas in a wink in his hands. What miracles! What can the poor people of Madura, who saw all these things, think ? They wondered; they gasped; they thought out a reason but blundered; they feared but remained dumb. They were bewildered. Their mind refused to think. They forgot their work. "It must be Siva, none but Siva, God Somasundara Himself," said they.

The king heard about these happenings. He sent some servants to fetch the Siddha. But these merely stayed to see

these wondrous things. Then the king sent his ministers. They went and prostrated themselves before the Siddha. They begged him to go with them to the king. The Siddha refused to follow them. Then they turned back. They reported to the king the Siddha's refusal. The king did not know what to do or think.

After some time, the king thought, " What a block-head I am ! He is a great man indeed, who can perform all these miracles. I sent for him out of foolishness. What needs he at my hands! Oh, nothing. It is I, that should have gone to him. "

The Siddha-purusha divined the king's thoughts. At once, he appeared in the presence of the king. The king had been to the temple to do puja. On his way back he met this Siddha. The Siddha was sitting on a tiger-skin right across his path. His servants asked the Siddha to move away. But the Siddha heeded it not. The king got angry. He forgot that the Siddha was a great one. He said,

"Get thee hence. Who are you? What is your name? What dost thou require from me? What dost thou know? Tell me, will you?" asked the king.

"Boy, we go wherever we please. We live wherever we want. For the present, we are living in Benares. People of our sort live by begging. We can perform wondrous feats. We have been to all sacred places in the south. We know that Madura is a most sacred place. To look at it merely will confer all good things in this world. It will also point out the way and means for the next world too. We are here to show these people our feats. We can give them also what they want. We are the master of the Vedas. We are the greatest Siddha, you can think of. At thy poor hands, we require nothing, thou Pandya." said the Siddha.

"This man's conceit is enormous. I shall put to the test his powers," thought the king and then turning to the Siddha, he asked,

"If you are as powerful as you pretend to be, would'st thou make this stone-elephant eat this sugar-cane?"

"Look here, Pandya. We have already told you that we require nothing from you. Still to satisfy you, we will do what you wish." So saying, the Siddha threw his glance on the stone-elephant.

The elephant all at once began to show signs of life. Slowly it raised its trunk. Then stretching it forth, it dragged away the sugar-cane from the hands of the king. Then it began to eat the sugar-cane. The Siddha once more looked at the elephant. Then it took away the pearl necklace from the neck of the king. The king resented it. The chamberlains lifted up their sticks to beat the elephant.

Then the Siddha once more looked at the elephant angrily. It then ate away the necklace. Now the king became very angry. His eyes seemed to emit fire.

Seeing this, the king's servants advanced to beat the Siddha. Then the

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Siddha said to them "Fools ! stop." They there stood rooted to the spot. They were utterly unable to move.

Now the king understood. He became wise. He fell down at the feet of the Siddha and cried,

"Great one ! forgive me."

"Thou art already forgiven. Ask, what you want. I will grant it," said the Siddha.

"Bless me with a son, great one," asked the king. "So be it," said the Siddha and then looked at the elephant.

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At once the elephant gave back the necklace to the king. The king received it back. But the Siddha was not to be seen anywhere.

Then the king knew that it was the great God Somasundara who had come there as the Siddha.

After ruling a little longer, Abishega Pandyan made over his kingdom to his son Vikrama Pandyan and became one with the Lord.

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